

Middle Snake Watershed Advisory Group Meeting

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
324 South 417 East, Jerome, Idaho

Wednesday, August 29, 2012, 6:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Mike Beus – Bureau of Reclamation
Stan Haye – Natural Resource Conservation Commission
Brian Hoelscher – Idaho Power Company (IPC)
Andy Knight – Idaho Power Company (IPC)
Clyde Lay – Bureau of Reclamation
Randy MacMillan – Clear Springs Food
Andy Morton – Clear Springs Food
Irene Nautch – DEQ Twin Falls Regional Office (TFRO)
Katie Shewmaker – DEQ Twin Falls Regional Office (TFRO)
Sue Switzer – DEQ Twin Falls Regional Office (TFRO)
Craig Thomas – DEQ Twin Falls Regional Office (TFRO)
Mike Trabert – City of Twin Falls
Jeff Williams – Rancher

Welcome

The meeting of the Mid Snake Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) was called to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. by Mike Trabert, WAG Chairman. The attendees introduced themselves and who they represented.

WAG Business

- The minutes for the February 15, 2012 WAG meeting were reviewed. Randy MacMillan made a motion to approve the minutes as written. The minutes were approved unanimously.
- November 21 will be our next regularly scheduled meeting; however, that is the day before Thanksgiving. The meeting was rescheduled for October 16.

319 Program Updates

Katie Shewmaker provided an update on the Twin Falls Coulee Project; the project awarded funding by the 319 program in 2011. The 2012 year would have proposed projects for Birch Creek in Lake Walcott and Cottonwood Creek in the Upper Snake Rock Watershed.

The 319 program is facing a possible 17% budget cut.

Cottonwood Riparian Fencing

Cindy Snyder was unable to attend the meeting, and ask Stan Haye, Natural Resource Conservation Commission, to present this project. Stan presented photos of the project site demonstrating where the proposed head-gate would be located on BLM property and where the fencing would be placed on private property. This project is primarily to restore and rehabilitate a section of Cottonwood Creek above the foothill road. Cottonwood Creek is listed on the state's 303(d) list. It is estimated that 10,000 pounds of phosphorus could be prevented from entering Cottonwood Creek.

Randy MacMillan made a motion to support of the project. The WAG voted to support.

Mid Snake Temperature Modeling

Andy Knight gave a presentation of a recognizance level study performed by Idaho Power on temperature modeling in the Middle Snake River between Milner and King Hill. Idaho Power felt that QUAL2Kw model was suitable for the Middle Snake; more information would help determine the model limitations. Andy accepted questions and comments from the WAG.

Upper Snake Rock Temperature TMDL Update

Sue Switzer informed the WAG that the PNV TMDL had received no public comment during the comment period. The document was submitted to state office where unofficially EPA will not accept the TMDL without waste load allocations (WLA) being developed for Point Sources. Data will have to be collected before those WLA can be developed. Sue was unsure if the data would be collected by DEQ or the permit holders.

Update Aquaculture General Permit

Craig Thomas presented an update on the General Aquaculture Permit (GAP), which will be expiring November 30, 2012. EPA was going to have the new permit ready by November 1; however, that is not going to happen. EPA is working on a draft with no timeline as to when the draft will be out. The deadline to submit Notice of Intent (NOI) was June 3. However, if anyone missed that deadline, contact Dirk Helder at EPA. It appears that EPA is still allowing NOI to be submitted. EPA plans to extend the existing permit until the new permit is finalized.

Tetra-Tech Contract Update

Sue Switzer handed out a memorandum from Leigh Woodruff, EPA Watershed Unit, dated August 28, 2012. The memo provided preliminary findings by Tetra Tech relevant to the Upper snake-Rock phosphorus TMDL.

The following concerns were raised by the WAG:

- The TMDL was written for the water column and the real concern is the nutrients in the substrate being utilized by the rooted macrophytes.
- There needs to be relatively consistent approach for the whole state of Idaho on nutrients.

- The TMDL may not be addressing the real problem (suspended nutrients vs. embedded).
- How well has 'nuisance aquatic plant growth' been defined and what level of phosphorus would maintain or reduce that level for our reach of the river.
- It was asked who within DEQ is reviewing the draft report, and if Sonny would be willing to report what he had been reading.
- Brian Hoelscher sits on a group for the Lower Boise Watershed that is struggling with the same issue - a relatively consistent approach (or method) for developing nutrient TMDLs needs to be created.
- The possibility of establishing a numeric standard for nutrients.
- The frustration of businesses that are making changes to their operations and there is possibly no benefit to water quality. (Are we really pursuing the right problem?)
- Continuity of targets upstream and downstream - changing one TMDL affects all the others
- The need for a meeting with Tetra Tech to present the data.
- The desire to review the TetraTech document before the meeting was expressed.
- Coordination with the Boise group to develop numeric standards or a consistent method for nutrients

Randy MacMillan will be approaching Sonny Buhidar and Bill Allred to discuss this further and how he may help to work with state office on one or more of the possible solutions discussed

Results from Bacteria Monitoring

Some creeks that were listed for fecal coliform have been changed over to E. coli. DEQ had to have a geometric mean in order to make the changeover. Therefore, DEQ did some collections; 5 samples over a 30 day period no closer than 3 days apart and no further than 7 day. Data from the 2012 bacteria monitoring was presented by Sue Switzer.

Dredge Mining Permit Update

EPA is working on the suction dredge permit, however dredgers may apply with IDWR for the state's dredging permit. If anyone is interested in more information please contact Sue Switzer and she will provide a more detailed summary.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Mike Trabert at approximately 8:25 p.m.



 WAG Chairman

Jan 16 2013
 Date